

member of the Security Lioness Club, a lifetime VFW member, and a member of the School District #3 Advisory Board long-range task force. She is also an active member of the Optimists Club and has served on the El Paso County Planning Commission. In addition to her humanitarian endeavors, Mary Ellen is the proud mother of three daughters, Marsha Epps, Kelly Hromas and Heather Segura.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Mary Ellen Epps is a woman of dedication and commitment to her state and its citizens. I am honored to be able to bring her hard work and dedication to the attention of this body of Congress, and to this nation. Thank you, Mary Ellen, for all of your hard work, and I wish you all the best in the future.

HONORING THE GENESEE VALLEY
ROTARY CLUB

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the Genesee Valley Rotary Club on celebrating its 25th anniversary. The Rotary Club will celebrate its anniversary with a special event on May 14.

The Genesee Valley Rotary Club began as a provisional club in March of 1977, through the support of Jack Hamady, Ray Kelley and Jerry Wittemore. The Genesee Valley Rotary Club grew so rapidly through community support that by May of 1977 the Rotary was given a charter at the district conference that was held in Port Huron. Over the past 25 years the Rotary Club has conducted one major fundraiser a year giving the proceeds to local or international projects that they believe give back to the community. In addition to this the members conduct various community projects throughout the year. Many of them work for the Salvation Army Christmas bell ringing campaign, others answer phones for telethons, and some work during the Big Brothers/Big Sisters bowling challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the Genesee Valley Rotary Club on celebrating its 25th anniversary. As a Rotary Club scholarship beneficiary I can attest to the unwavering support they give to the community. I applaud their involvement in the Flint area for the past quarter century.

HONORING THE DEDICATION OF
THE ALVIRDA HYMAN LEARNING
CENTER IN FREMONT, CA

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the grand opening of the Alvirda Hyman Learning Center, an innovative new alternative learning facility donated by the Fremont Bank to the Fremont Unified School District in honor of Alvirda Hyman's dedication to continuing education.

Alvirda Hyman is a living testimony to the power of lifelong learning and a role model for her commitment to community service. Throughout her adult life, Mrs. Hyman has been a strong supporter of education for students from preschool through adulthood.

It was her support of her husband, Morris, in continuing his education that sewed the seeds of a career change that led to the founding of Fremont Bank in the early 1960s. Now one of the most successful family-owned businesses in the Bay Area, the Fremont Bank's 21 branches are a tribute to continuing education's ability to transform individual lives and improve communities.

Likewise, the Alvirda Hyman Learning Center, which represents one of the most generous corporate contributions in the history of the Fremont Unified School District, is the ideal tribute to Mrs. Hyman's dedication to education. When Fremont Bank consolidated its support facilities, a 12,000 square-foot modular building became vacated and available for donation. The bank donated the building to the school district for use as instructional space.

The new facility allows the Fremont Unified School District to provide tremendously improved space for several alternative education programs. It provides the Circle of Independent Learning Charter School a permanent home; it provides the Adult School Parent Education Program space designed specifically for its unique needs; and it gives the State Pre-School Program a permanent classroom within the district.

As part of a full community effort, the building was moved in 20 sections to the Mowry Adult School site. Re-construction began in August 2001, and has resulted in a beautiful new facility designed especially to serve the individual needs of the alternative learning programs housed there. The commercial structure was re-designed into an attractive and functional learning environment, complete with a playground and activity areas. The 20 separate modular units were recombined into a structurally coherent and aesthetically stunning building.

I am honored to congratulate Alvirda Hyman for her remarkable belief in the power and importance of lifelong learning. Her dedication to improving education has assured every citizen of Fremont the opportunity for a bright future, filled with ongoing education.

H.R. 4231—SMALL BUSINESS
ADVOCACY IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in strong support of H.R. 4231, the Small Business Advocacy Improvement Act. Created in 1976 by Congress, the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Advocacy's primary mission is to protect, strengthen and effectively represent small businesses within the Federal government's legislative and rule-making process. The Office of Advocacy works to reduce the burdens that Federal government policies impose on small business and encourage policies that support the development and growth of American small business.

However, the Office of Advocacy is forced each year to negotiate with OMB and the Administration on the provisions in its budget. In order for the Office of Advocacy to strengthen its voice and credibility for small businesses, it must be independent of any undue interference or influence that might hinder its ability to speak out objectively on behalf of small businesses.

To that end, H.R. 4231 requires that Advocacy's budget request be included in the President's budget submission to Congress each fiscal year without being changed. This will give the Office of Advocacy greatly increased fiscal independence from the Administration and will allow Advocacy to stay true to its core mission of providing support to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

In addition, continuation of service for the SBA Chief Counsel for Advocacy, unlimited authorization for the Office of Advocacy, and replacing the "minority enterprises" terminology to include women owned businesses and veteran businesses in the primary functions of the Office of Advocacy are also important provisions included in H.R. 4231.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this important legislation and help improve the support provided to our nation's small businesses by the SBA's Office of Advocacy. Vote "yes" on H.R. 4231.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY WIDOW'S
BENEFIT GUARANTEE ACT OF 2002

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, today I am offering a bill to make long overdue improvements in Social Security benefits. My bill would provide higher benefits for an estimated 5 million widows and other elderly beneficiaries. At the same time, it maintains fiscal responsibility by assuring that the bill does not affect the financial solvency of the Social Security system.

Elderly non-married women, including widows, rely heavily on Social Security benefits. Three out of four depend on it for at least half of their total income. And four in 10 depend on it for 90 percent or more of their income.

At the same time, widows are among the poorest of all Social Security beneficiaries. Over the last 30 years, poverty rates among the elderly have fallen from 29 percent in 1966 to 8.5 percent in 2000. But among widows, the poverty rate remains high—at 15 percent in 2000. The incomes of elderly women are very modest. The median income for non-married elderly women, including widows, was about \$12,000 a year in 2000.

The time to address this situation is now. Republicans want to spend trillions of dollars to privatize Social Security, and they want to wait until after the election to do it. Democrats are proposing to invest less than one-twentieth of that amount to improve benefits for the neediest beneficiaries, and we want to do it now, without delay. Democrats want to improve Social Security and help its neediest beneficiaries, rather than destroy it by risky privatization schemes that require trillions of new dollars and deep benefit cuts.

BILL SUMMARY

The bill would create a new "widow's guarantee" for Social Security beneficiaries. Widows and widowers would be guaranteed a

benefit equal to 75% of the combined benefits the couple had been receiving prior to the death of one spouse.

The widow's guarantee would provide higher benefits than widows receive under current law—which only provides benefits equal to what the husband had been receiving prior to his death. Under current law, widows are effectively limited to only 50–67 percent of what the couple had been receiving. Yet under federal guidelines, a one-person household is estimated to need 80 percent of the income of a two-person household. This bill would reduce the drop in Social Security income that would otherwise occur upon the death of a spouse.

For example, the average retired worker on the rolls today receives a benefit of \$874 per month. If that worker has a spouse who is entitled to Social Security spousal benefits, their combined benefit is \$1311. Under current law, the widow would receive \$874 after her husband dies. Under the 75% widow's guarantee, the widow would get a benefit of \$983 a month—an increase of \$109 a month, or 12 percent more than she would receive under current law.

To assure that the increased benefits are concentrated on those with the greatest need, the increase would be subject to a dollar cap of \$1000 a month, which would be indexed in 2003 and later years.

The benefit increase is estimated to help 5 million widows and widowers, one million of whom are currently living in poverty.

This bill also includes benefit improvements to help certain groups of disabled widows, elderly widows whose husbands died shortly after retirement, and divorced spouses. Over 120,000 beneficiaries would see increases as a result of this section of the bill.

Finally, this is fully financed through general revenue transfers to Social Security. This makes the Trust Funds whole for the cost of these vital benefit improvements.

This legislation promotes the needs of our poorest and most vulnerable elderly. It improves and strengthens Social Security's guaranteed, dependable monthly income. It assures that widows and widowers will have at least a minimally decent standard of living in old-age. I am pleased to introduce the Social Security Widow's Benefit Guarantee Act.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO FRANA ARAUJO MACE

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Frana Araujo Mace and thank her for her extraordinary contributions in the Colorado General Assembly. Her dedication to both her job and the people of Colorado deserves the recognition of this body of Congress, and, indeed, this nation. She will be remembered as a State Representative with the utmost dedication to her constituents, and as she moves on in her career, I would like to thank her for all of her hard work in the Colorado Legislature.

Frana was appointed to the Colorado State House of Representatives in 1995 to fill a vacancy, and was subsequently elected in 1996,

1998 and 2000. During her tenure in the State House, she served as the House Minority Whip and was a member of the House Services, Local Government, Transportation, and Energy committees. She was the mayoral appointee to the Denver Board of Adjustment and Zoning Appeals from 1976 through 1986, was the Governor's appointee to the Commission on Aging, and served as the party finance chair from District 4A.

Not only has Frana served the community effectively as a member of the Colorado General Assembly, she has also done her part as an active humanitarian. She served as the President and Chairman of the Northside Community Center, and on the Servicios de la Raza cooperative endeavor. For her hard work and dedication, Frana was named the Hispanic Woman of the Year/Political Division in 1995. In addition to her community endeavors, Frana is married to Gilbert Mace, and is the proud mother of five children.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that Frana's colleagues and constituents will sorely miss the leadership and compassion that she consistently gave to the State of Colorado, and I thank her for all that she has done for the state. I am honored to bring her accomplishments to the attention of this body of Congress, and wish her all the best in the future. Her hard work and dedication truly embodies the spirit of the State, and it is with a great deal of pride that I thank her for her many years of public service.

ON THE DEATH OF MSGR. GEORGE HIGGINS

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to a man who devoted his life to social justice.

Today we say goodbye to Monsignor George G. Higgins, who headed the Social Action Department of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for 35 years. Msgr. Higgins died May 1, and was buried today in his home town of LaGrange, Illinois. He was 86 years old.

Msgr. Higgins fought for the rights of workers, whether they were auto workers in Detroit, farm workers in California or steelworkers on the Iron Range of Minnesota. He wrote nearly 3,000 columns on social issues for Catholic newspapers across the country from 1945 until September 2001, when he could no longer continue because of failing eyesight.

Msgr. Higgins held a doctorate in economics and political science from Catholic University of America. He was awarded the University of Notre Dame's highest honor, the Laetare Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Last year he was honored as one of the great pioneers in promoting dialogue between Catholics and Jews by the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.

Msgr. Higgins made a lasting imprint on the Church's approach to social policy in America: feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, clothing the poor.

As columnist E.J. Dionne wrote in today's Washington Post, "It is one of the highest callings of spiritual leaders to force those who

live happy and comfortable lives to consider their obligations to those heavily burdened by injustice and deprivation." Msgr. Higgins answered that calling.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when a dark cloud of scandal hangs over the Catholic Church, it is important to note that the priesthood is full of good men doing God's work. Msgr. Higgins was such a priest. All of us who believe in the fair treatment of working men and women, compassion for the poorest among us, and brotherhood with those of other faiths, will miss him deeply.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to submit the full text of E.J. Dionne's column for the RECORD.

[Washingtonpost.com, May 7, 2002]

THE GREAT MONSIGNOR

(By E. J. Dionne, Jr.)

There is no such thing as a timely death. But just when you thought all the stories on American priests were destined to be about evil committed and covered up, one of the truly great priests was called to his eternal reward.

Monsignor George G. Higgins was the sort of Catholic clergyman regularly cast as a hero in movies of the 1940s and '50s. He was an uncompromising pro-labor priest who walked picket lines, fought anti-Semitism, supported civil rights and wrote and wrote and wrote in the hope that some of his arguments about social justice might penetrate somewhere.

He got attached to causes before they became fashionable, and stuck with them after the fashionable people moved on. Cesar Chavez once said that no one had done more for American farm workers than Monsignor Higgins. In the 1980s, he traveled regularly to Poland in support of Solidarity's struggle against communism and became an important link between American union leaders and their Polish brethren.

As it happens, even the day of Monsignor Higgins' death, at the age of 86, was appropriate. He passed from this world on May 1, the day that many countries set aside to honor labor and that the Catholic Church designates as the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

If Higgins had been there when that famous carpenter was looking for a place to spend the night with his pregnant wife, the monsignor would certainly have taken the family in. He would also have handed Joseph a union card, told him he deserved better pay and benefits, and insisted that no working person should ever have to beg for shelter.

Yes, Higgins sounds so old-fashioned—and in every good sense he was—that you might wonder about his relevance to our moment. Let us count the ways.

One of the most astonishing and disturbing aspects of the Catholic Church's current scandal is the profound disjunction—that's a charitable word—between what the church preaches about sexuality and compassion toward the young and how its leaders reacted to the flagrant violation of these norms by priests.

Higgins, who spent decades as the Catholic Church's point man on labor and social justice issues, hated the idea of preachers' exhorting people to do one thing and then doing the opposite. And so he made himself into a true pain for any administrator of any Catholic institution who resisted the demands of workers for fair pay and union representation.

"These men and women mop the floors of Catholic schools, work in Catholic hospital kitchens and perform other sometimes menial tasks in various institutions," he once wrote. "They have not volunteered to serve the church for less than proportionate compensation."